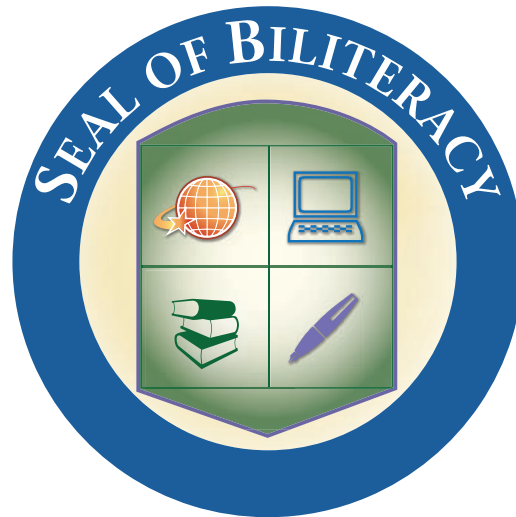


Californians Together

presents

THE SEAL OF BILITERACY PROGRAM



The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a school, school district or county office of education in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. Appearing on the transcript of the graduating senior, the Seal of Biliteracy is a statement of accomplishment for future employers and for college admissions.

Californians Together established the Seal of Biliteracy Award in 2008. These guidelines for the award were authored by Dr. Laurie Olsen. The text inside may be downloaded from:

www.californiantogether.org.

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Special Acknowledgement to

California Assemblyman Joe Coto for his vision and commitment to promoting second language learning for all students. Assemblyman Coto instituted the Seal of Biliteracy during his tenure as Superintendent of East Side Union High School District in San Jose, California.



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Why Implement a Seal of Biliteracy?

A Seal of Biliteracy (and the pathway awards) are a statement by the school system that biliteracy is important. It encourages students to pursue biliteracy, and communicates clearly that mastery of two or more languages is an important skill for participation in a 21st century diverse world and economy. It is a way of honoring the skills our students attain, and can be attractive to future employers and college admissions offices.

Has anyone ever done this before?

Yes! Glendale Unified School District, Ventura Unified School District, Rowland Unified School District, Sweetwater Union High School District, and Eastside Union High School District – and several others – have piloted this approach in California. Albuquerque Public School District also instituted a Seal of Biliteracy.

Is this just for English Learners? What about students who are not English Learners and are studying a second language?

A Seal of Biliteracy is granted to all students who meet the criteria for the award. For each level, criteria are set for students whose first language is English and are learning a second language, as well as, for English Learners who are developing academic proficiency in their home language while mastering English.

Is this just for Spanish speakers? What about other language groups?

Seals of Biliteracy are for students who master standard academic English and any other language, including American Sign Language. Advanced Placement Tests are available in many languages, but not all. Some districts have developed their own assessment process for languages where there were no existing tests – and use a common rubric for scoring the tests. A Linguafolio approach has been developed by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages. Currently, schools use a combination of assessments, course requirements, student work and performance. If your school or district seeks models and ideas for how this is done, contact Californians Together or one of the individuals listed on the Resource Page of this document.

What entities can bestow a Seal of Biliteracy?

A county office of education can invite individual schools and/or districts to institute a Seal of Biliteracy approach. The county office can provide assistance in identifying appropriate language assessments, and publicizing a Seal of Biliteracy model. It is up to the schools and/or districts to actually engage students, put together an application process, and certify that students have met the requirements for a Seal. The list of students who qualify can be submitted to the county office. The county office then provides a Seal (or an extra award if the district has provided a Seal), and can host a county-wide award ceremony or celebration. Some county offices are specifically reaching out to the Dual Language programs in their county, through their Bilingual Directors' networks, and through their World Languages specialists.

Steps to Implementing a Seal of Biliteracy

The purposes of instituting a Seal of Biliteracy and the "Pathways to Biliteracy" Awards are:

- ◉ To encourage students to pursue bilingualism
- ◉ To certify attainment of biliteracy
- ◉ To recognize and value the biliteracy skills of all students
- ◉ To provide employers with a method of identifying people with language and biliteracy skills
- ◉ To provide universities with a method to recognize and give credit to applicants with biliteracy skills
- ◉ To prepare students with 21st Century Skills

To implement a Seal of Biliteracy or the Pathways awards, it is important to clarify the purpose of the award and to articulate and "frame" the rationale that resonates with your community. There are various levels of awards that may be given, and you will need to determine the specific levels and criteria to be used for your awards. The following models and suggestions are provided to assist you.

Step 1. Articulate the Rationale and “Frame” the Award

It is important to present and frame a Seal of Biliteracy in terms that fit local goals and interests. For one district, for example, the emphasis on 21st century skills and jobs may be most appropriate. For another district, emphasizing bringing students together across communities and learning respect for diversity may be the most relevant approach.

These steps can help you think about how to frame the Seal of Biliteracy. Consider which (if any) of the following “frames” resonate in your community:

- ◉ Increase job options for our students, prepare students for the labor market, meet the economic needs for bilingual workers in our community;
- ◉ Strengthen intergroup relationships, affirm the value of diversity, promote civic participation and honor the cultures of our community; and
- ◉ Establish high standards for academic mastery, strengthening skills of literacy and problem solving.



Step 2. Write your Rationale & Preamble

Select language from the following statements that might be used in a "Preamble," rationale, or resolution establishing your Seal of Biliteracy.

• Increase job options for our students, prepare students for the labor market, meet the economic needs for bilingual workers in our community

Whereas, mastery of two or more languages increases job opportunities for our students;

Whereas, promoting the study of world languages contributes towards our economy and our national security;

Whereas, multiple languages are a critical element in enabling our city and state to participate effectively in a global political, social and economic context;

Whereas, the demand for employees to be fluent in more than one language is increasing in our region, in California and throughout the world.

• To strengthen intergroup relationships, affirm the value of diversity, promote civic participation and honor the cultures of our community

Whereas, our schools are committed to creating affirming and enriched learning environments that actively impart the value of diversity, that bring students together across differences, and that embrace the cultures and languages of our community;

Whereas, the pursuit and attainment of biliteracy enables our students to participate in and to bridge across multiple cultural and language worlds;

Whereas, we are committed to creating a learning environment in which students home languages are respected and in which student participation in an English speaking society is promoted;

Whereas, we value bilingualism and the rich language diversity of our community;

Whereas, the opportunity and encouragement to develop high levels of skill in ones home language, as well as in English, enable English Learners to more actively and authentically participate, and also build essential leadership skill for a diverse society;

Whereas, we affirm that our schools are places in which students home languages are respected;

Whereas, we value bilingualism and the rich language diversity of our community.

• *High standards for academic mastery, strengthening academic skills of literacy and problem solving*

Whereas, literacy in two or more languages is a high, challenging academic standard;

Whereas, a curriculum that provides opportunities for high level mastery of multiple languages enables students to gain the knowledge and skills to live in and take responsibility for and lead in our complex 21st century global world;

Whereas, the development of literacy in two or more languages is known to have cognitive advantages – increasing mental flexibility, divergent thinking, and mathematical problem solving:

Whereas, developing a child’s home language is a strong foundation for high academic literacy in English.

Note: A complete sample resolution can be found on page 14.



Step 3. Determine the Criteria for the Award and the Levels at which it will be Granted

The High School Seal of Biliteracy is awarded upon attainment of a high level of proficiency in two or more languages. In addition to the High School Seal, awards can be provided for students along the pathway toward attainment. These may be given at preschool graduation, the end of elementary school, and the end of middle school. Sample criteria for all awards follows.

A. The High School Seal of Biliteracy

The High School Seal of Biliteracy certifies attainment of a high level of proficiency in two or more languages. There are a variety of criteria that schools and districts may use in determining attainment. These include:

- ◉ Successful completion of required language courses
- ◉ Successful completion of specific required level for World Language or Native Speakers Courses (e.g., Level IV or above)
- ◉ Bilingual Seal Application Process
- ◉ Writing Assessment and Rubric (with a specified level of attainment)
- ◉ Oral Interview Assessment and rubric
- ◉ Reading Assessment and Rubric
- ◉ Use of the Linguafolio (or other portfolio with a rubric)
- ◉ Passage of tests of language proficiency at a specific level
- ◉ District developed performance criteria



B. Middle School Awards

Middle School Awards can be presented for students on the path to biliteracy (the “Pursuit of Bilingualism Award”) or for attainment of a specified level of biliteracy (the “Biliteracy Attainment Award”).

1. Middle School “Pursuit of Bilingualism Award”

This award is designed to reward engagement in pursuit of language skills in two or more languages, to affirm positive attitudes towards multilingualism, and to validate use of multiple languages for all students. Requirements may include:

- ⦿ Participation in at least two years of a Foreign Language class or a Native Speakers class, with a passing grade;
- ⦿ California Standards Test – English Language Arts portion at a “Proficient” level or above;
- ⦿ Written essay on why knowing multiple languages is important;
- ⦿ Oral presentation about five careers where bilingualism is important, and why and how bilingualism is a benefit in those careers;
- ⦿ A personal response essay to having attended two cultural events from the second language/culture being studied.

2. Middle School “Biliteracy Attainment Award”

This award is designed to set a standard for high level biliteracy attainment for students in a Two-Way Bilingual Immersion or Dual Language program. All students, English fluent and English Learners, would have to meet the following performance standards:

- ⦿ Proficient or above on the Standards Test in Spanish or District Assessment of grade-level competency in a language other than English;
- ⦿ Oral Proficiency in a language other than English (e.g., for a Spanish speaker in a Two-Way Bilingual Immersion or Dual Language program, LAS at a level 6/8 or equivalent);

continued...

- ⦿ California Standards Test – English Language Arts portion at a “Proficient” level or above;
- ⦿ Average grades of B or higher in English classes and in World Language or Native Speakers courses;
- ⦿ Written essay on why knowing multiple languages is important;
- ⦿ Oral presentation about five careers where bilingualism is important, and why and how bilingualism is a benefit in those careers;
- ⦿ A personal response essay to having attended two cultural events from the second language/culture they are studying;
- ⦿ In addition, for English Learners, EL students must meet the redesignation criteria for RFEP.

C. Elementary School Awards (Granted at the End of 5th Grade)

1. Elementary Bilingual Service & Participation Award (BSPA)

The intent of the Elementary School “Bilingual Service and Participation Award” (BPSA) is to encourage students along the path of bilingualism, and to place value on the continued use of two languages for English Learners who are NOT in a dual language or maintenance bilingual program that actually leads to biliteracy. The criteria is:

- ⦿ Age appropriate oral/listening proficiency in home language (e.g. Spanish LAS at a level 4 or higher, or the Standards Test in Spanish at the proficient level at whatever grade the student last studied in Spanish);
- ⦿ Attainment of age-appropriate proficiency in English (CELDT Proficiency for English Learners; California Standards Test in English Language Arts at a “Proficient” or higher level for English Only students);
- ⦿ Active use of two languages;
- ⦿ Ability to write coherently and with purpose in both languages (based on a rubric);
- ⦿ Positive attitudes towards bilingualism and understanding that bilingualism has benefits (demonstrated through an essay or oral presentation).

2. Elementary School “Biliteracy Award”

This award is designed to measure attainment of age-appropriate biliteracy for students who have been in Two-Way Bilingual Immersion, Dual Language, or maintenance bilingual programs. Criteria could include:

- o California Standards Test in English Language Arts at the “Proficient” level or above in fifth grade;
- o Demonstration of proficiency in a language other than English (e.g., a Standards Test in Spanish at the “Proficient” level or above in fifth grade, attainment of a level 4 or higher on the Spanish LAS.

3. Elementary School Portfolio Requirement

In addition to the requirements outlined above, both the BSPA and the Biliteracy Award are based upon a Portfolio system. Students need to complete four out of six criteria for the Portfolio: These include:

- o Completion of 20 hours of community service using primary language skills in service to the school or community, and demonstrating the ability to use translation in social situations;
- o A written paper in two languages (translation) with a rubric score of 4 or above at the 5th grade level;
- o A written essay on why bilingualism is important – to them personally, to their community and to the world;
- o Oral presentation about five careers where bilingualism is important, and why and how bilingualism is a benefit in those careers;
- o For English Learners, redesignation from English Learner to RFEP status;
- o Reading logs signed by their teachers of 10 books (at grade level) read independently in English and ten books (at grade level) read independently in a language other than English.

D. “Pathway To Biliteracy” Award for Preschoolers

The purpose of the award at this level, is to create a benchmark that is reachable for young children who are learning both languages. It is more a participation award than an attainment award. To be on a pathway towards biliteracy, a preschooler needs to develop strong age-appropriate oral language skills and vocabulary in their home language, to demonstrate active engagement with books/text and age-appropriate comprehension in their home language and have some measure of exposure to a second language.

1. Measure of Age-Appropriate Oral Language Development in Home Language:

- ⦿ Meet #14 DRDP (Desired Results) measures of language use and skill at the “Proficient” level.
- ⦿ Identify and say the names of colors
- ⦿ Count to 10
- ⦿ Follow 3-step instructions given in the home language

2. Measure of active engagement with books/text

- ⦿ Is able to retell a “Read Aloud” story
- ⦿ Can dictate a story in the home language from a picture
- ⦿ Has developed a Log of 20 books the child has been read-to in one-on-one or small group settings
- ⦿ Is able to write their name

3. Measure of basic production level in second language

- ⦿ Is able to demonstrate comprehensible production of sounds in a second language through singing two songs in the second language
- ⦿ Can demonstrate recall and fluency through reciting a poem or chant in the second language
- ⦿ Can demonstrate basic vocabulary in a second language by identifying colors, counting to ten, and appropriately using simple greetings and appropriate social responses.

Another Resource for Establishing Criteria: Linguafolio

The Linguafolio is a World Language formative assessment tool that can inform instruction and be the basis for certifying a level of competency in languages. It is based on a globally recognized scale of language proficiency, with six levels of performance/competency. The scale is correlated with the ACTFL performance and proficiency guidelines, and was developed by the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages. The Linguafolio involves both self-assessment and performance criteria. A Linguistic Profile, Summary of Language Learning and Intercultural Experiences, Language Biography, and specified work samples are included in the portfolio. For more information go to the website: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/linguafolio/>

Step 4. Design the award and the process for award presentation



Awards can be granted at a school or district reception, celebration, special award assembly. They can be part of the school graduation and/or affixed to the transcripts of graduating seniors.

Above: Sample plaque awarded to graduating seniors by Glendale Unified School District in Glendale, California.

Step 5. Craft a resolution, seek support and implementation

The following example of a Biliteracy Resolution is from a California High School District.

Preamble and Rationale:

Whereas, mastery of two or more languages makes important contributions to a student's cognitive development, understanding of diverse cultures, and economic opportunities;

Whereas, the study of world languages contributes towards our national economy and our national security;

Whereas, multiple languages are a critical element in enabling our city and state to participate effectively in a global political, social and economic context;

Whereas, the demand for employees to be fluent in more than one language is increasing both in California and throughout the world;

Whereas, our community is home to speakers from hundreds of different language and cultural groups, and to build trust and understanding across the multiple language and cultural groups in our diverse community requires multilingual skills of communication;

Whereas, the California K-16 Master Plan for Education calls for pupils to graduate literate in two or more languages;

Therefore, it is the intent of *Your District/School Name* to promote the development of literacy in two or more languages and to provide recognition of the attainment of those needed and important skills through the establishment of a Seal of Biliteracy on the high school diplomas or transcripts of pupils attaining functional proficiency in one or more languages, in addition to English. Through the establishment of this Seal of Biliteracy, the District seeks to:

- ◉ encourage pupils to develop biliteracy skills;
- ◉ provide employers with a method of identifying people with language and biliteracy skills;
- ◉ revitalize and promote world language instruction in our schools;
- ◉ encourage the development of dual language immersion programs, and foreign, native and heritage language programs in schools;
- ◉ recognize and honor our rich and diverse language assets.

The SEAL shall be awarded by the Superintendent to pupils who complete the requirements for a high school diploma and who meet all of the following requirements:

He or she shall pass the California Standards Test in English Language Arts administered in grade 11 at a proficient level or above AND do any one of the following:

- (1) Successfully complete four years of instruction in a world language or a heritage language (e.g., Spanish for Native Speakers), or
- (2) Pass a world language Advanced Placement (AP) test with a score of three or higher, or
- (3) Complete a Linguafolio, demonstrating a performance and competency level of B1 or above.

Note: For languages in which an AP test is not available, equivalent summative tests may be used in place of an AP test.



Questions?

For further information and support to implement a Seal of Biliteracy Program, please contact:

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Californians Together is a statewide coalition of parents, teachers, education advocates and civil rights groups committed to securing equal access to quality education for all children.

Founded in 1998 after the passage of Proposition 227, Californians Together joined with other organizations to foster full participation in a democratic society through quality education for children and parents from underserved communities.

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